

HEALTH AND SCIENCE

‘Vaccinated, recovered or dead’: Germany gives stark winter warning to its people

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Holly Ellyatt
 @HOLLYELLYATT

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KEY POINTS

- Germany’s health minister issued a stark warning to the country’s public on Monday, telling them that vaccination was the key to their survival.
- Outgoing Chancellor Merkel has called on Germany’s federal states to decide upon tougher measures and another lockdown is a possibility.

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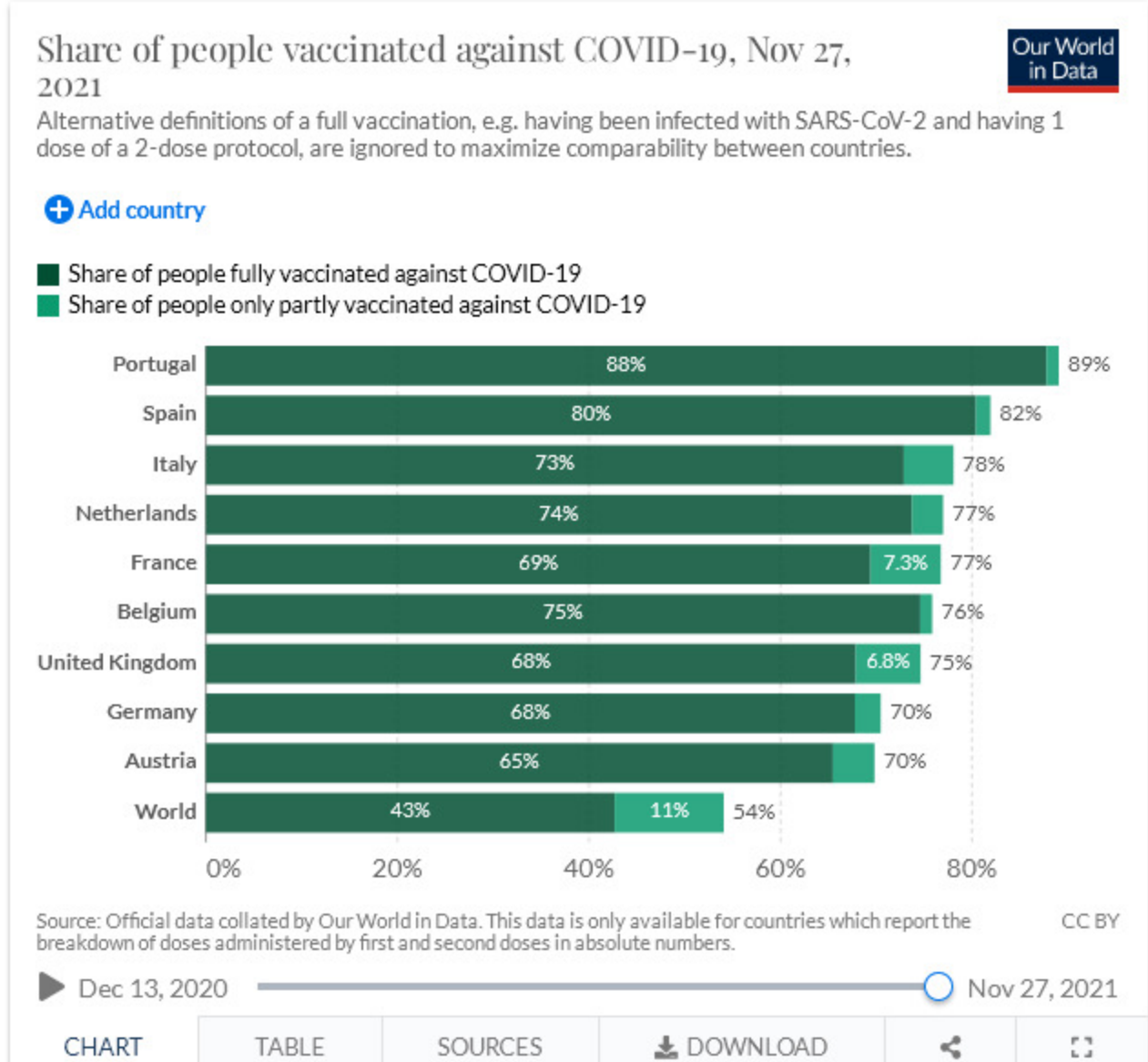
Germany’s health minister has issued a stark warning to the country’s public, telling citizens that vaccination was the key to their survival.

“Some would say this is cynical but probably by the end of this winter, pretty much everyone in Germany will be vaccinated, recovered or dead ... That’s the reality,” Jens Spahn told a press conference in Berlin on Monday.

Blaming “the very contagious delta variant” for the country’s rapid surge in infections, which is seen as its fourth wave of the pandemic, Spahn said “that is why we so urgently recommend vaccination.”

Germany is considering whether to implement stricter Covid-19 measures and even a partial lockdown like its neighbor, the Netherlands, as cases soar. On Monday, more than 30,000 new cases were recorded, according to the Robert Koch Institute for infectious diseases.

In the meantime, Germany has one of the lower vaccination rates in western Europe with 68% of its adult population fully vaccinated, but only 7% having received a booster shot. Boosters are needed as we know that the immunity offered by vaccines wanes after around six months.



Spahn told Germans not to be picky about which vaccine they wanted to receive, saying “some vaccinating physicians say BioNTech is the Mercedes of the vaccines and Moderna is the Rolls-Royce,” Deutsche Welle reported.

“There is enough vaccine for all upcoming vaccinations,” Spahn said. “And both vaccines work.”

Germany deploys both the Pfizer-BioNTech shot (BioNTech is a German company and Germans have tended to prefer this shot) as well as the Moderna vaccine, AstraZeneca-University of Oxford vaccine and the Janssen (Johnson & Johnson) shot.



Jens Spahn, Federal Minister of Health, on the way to the presentation of the National Reserve Health Protection in the federal press conference on July 21, 2021 in Berlin, Germany.

Andreas Gora | Getty Images/News | Getty Images

Covid vaccines greatly reduce the risk of severe infection, hospitalization and death but some countries in Europe have experienced greater vaccine hesitancy than others. And there is increasing segregation now when it comes to access to public spaces for vaccinated and unvaccinated people.

Geert Molenberghs, professor of Biostatistics at the Universiteit Hasselt and Katholieke Universiteit Leuven in Belgium, told CNBC that it was crucial to roll out booster shots, as well as improving the general level of Covid vaccination.

“It’s very important that we do this (roll out boosters) as quick as possible together with increasing the base vaccination rate, in too many European countries, and especially in the East, the base vaccination rate is still way too low,” he told CNBC’s Squawk Box Europe Tuesday.

Merkel's warning

Outgoing Chancellor Angela Merkel also issued her own warning to the country on Monday, stating that current Covid rules were “not enough” to stop the fourth wave and that stronger action needed to be taken.

“We have a highly dramatic situation — the current rules are not enough,” Merkel told a meeting of leaders of her conservative Christian Democratic Union party, [Reuters reported](#).

Having met with the leaders of Germany’s 16 federal states, which have largely determined their own Covid response measures during the pandemic, Merkel called on state premiers to decide on tougher restrictions by Wednesday.

Germany has already implemented stricter Covid rules in recent days. Last Thursday, [Merkel](#) and the country’s 16 state premiers agreed a new package of measures to tackle the virus, with restrictions introduced for unvaccinated people in areas of the country where hospital admissions exceed a certain threshold.

Merkel noted at the time that “many of the measures we are announcing would not be necessary if more people were vaccinated.” She said the country was also considering making it mandatory for hospital staff to be vaccinated, and that free Covid testing would resume.

Several states and cities have already imposed stricter rules requiring the public to show Covid passes, which have an individual’s vaccination status or if they’ve just recovered from the virus (also widely known as “2G rules” as they refer to whether people are vaccinated — “geimpft” in German — or recovered, “genesen”) in order to access bars, restaurants and other public venues like movie theaters or museums.

Europe's latest wave

Germany is not alone in witnessing a rapid increase in Covid cases as winter sets in, with Europe as a whole seeing soaring infections, prompting many countries to tighten rules.

Austria has re-imposed a full lockdown with citizens asked to work from home and non-essential shops closed, while the Netherlands’ partial lockdown sees bars and restaurants closed at 8 p.m. (among other rules) and is meant to last until early December, although it could be extended.

CNBC Health & Science

- Read CNBC’s latest global coverage of the Covid pandemic:
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 - [FDA clears Moderna’s and Pfizer’s Covid vaccine booster shots for all U.S. adults](#)
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Many countries are increasingly relying on Covid passes to keep leisure activities and businesses open, although critics say they are [segregating](#) societies down vaccination lines.

Read more: [Protests against Covid rules and lockdowns erupt across Europe](#)

Europe has been rocked by protests in the last few weeks against fresh restrictions, with demonstrations breaking out in Brussels, Vienna, Rome and Amsterdam last weekend.

The region’s Covid crisis has not been lost on the U.S. [which only recently lifted an international travel ban](#) that had prohibited visitors from 33 countries, including the U.K. and much of Europe. On Monday, the U.S. State Department warned Americans not to travel to Germany due to the “very high level of Covid-19 in the country.”

The advisory came after the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention issued a statement to “avoid travel to Germany. If you must travel to Germany, make sure you are fully vaccinated before travel.”

“Because of the current situation in Germany, even fully vaccinated travelers may be at risk for getting and spreading Covid-19 variants,” the CDC warned. The same level of travel warning applies to the U.K., Austria, the Netherlands, Slovakia, Denmark and Norway among other European countries.

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Gottlieb says breakthrough Covid infections more common than people realize due to weak monitoring

Dr. Scott Gottlieb told CNBC that people should get boosters as soon as possible because breakthrough infections are occurring more than the public realizes.

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